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ABSTRACT

Background information and ideas to help K-12 social studies teachers teach about local government are provided in this guide. Activities that involve the study of local governments may be a means by which positive attitudes and skills for citizenship education can be developed. Such activities can give students first-hand experience with the workings of democratic government. The guide begins by discussing the various forms of local government, e.g., counties, townships, and city governments. Current educational practices regarding local government are discussed. Basic goals for the teaching of local government are listed, and how such a study can be integrated into the K-12 social studies curriculum is examined. Practical suggestions for classroom activities that focus on the study of local government are provided. Tips to help teachers involve community personnel and use local facilities are discussed. Some often asked questions about local government are answered, and steps for developing a local government simulation are presented. The guide concludes with an annotated list of materials that offer practical suggestions for resource material for classroom use. (RM)

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HOW TO DO IT

SERIES 3, NO. 2

Teaching About Local Governments

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Preparing young people to be responsible citizens has been a major goal of public school education since its conception. In 1918, the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education gave formal acceptance to this notion when it endorsed "Civic Participation" as one of its seven Cardinal Principles of Education. In applying this concept, schools have traditionally prepared students for civic participation by emphasizing the teaching of courses in history and political science, as well as adhering to activities such as saluting the flag and celebrating patriotic holidays in the classroom.

The problems that social studies teachers face are: How to make clear to young people that they have a say in their government and the decisions it makes; and how to teach them decision-making skills, communication skills, and a sense of responsibility to family, community, and nation.

Activities that involve the study of local governments may be a means by which positive attitudes and skills for citizenship education can be developed. Such activities can give students first-hand experience with the workings of democratic government. Government need no longer be viewed as something that takes place in Washington, DC, or at the State Capitol. Rather, it may be viewed as a government that directly affects the students' lives, and that is located right around the corner at the City Building.

WHAT ARE THE "OTHER GOVERNMENTS"?

The "other governments" is a term that can be used to describe all the forms of local government that are directly involved in governmental activities affecting people's lives. In taking a closer look at local governments, it becomes evident that they can be categorized into several different forms:

Counties.

The county, with its political subdivisions, is geographically the most common form of local government in the United States. It exemplifies a heritage and a continuity from British and colonial self-government and provides civic links between rural citizens and the outside world. For the most part, counties represent a rural form of local government. However, due to urbanization, some counties (such as Los Angeles county, with more than seven million residents) have lost their rural character. The main governing authority of a county is a body of elected members called a "board," "court," or "commission." Counties are often both the policy-making and administrative arm of the government, with general responsibility over all governmental concerns.

New England Towns.

The New England Town has long been cited as the ideal form of direct government. Although not created as municipal corporations, such governments have gained both municipal and judicial functions through time. The trademark of the town is the town meeting, where all qualified voters meet to elect officials and determine local policy. Elected officials are usually called "selectmen" and direct the activities of the government when town meetings are not in session. Due to urbanization and population growth, a number of town meetings have lost some of their effectiveness.

Townships.

In many ways, the township reflects the historical concept of the New England Town. A large number of townships are rural and have a tendency to be outlets for the administration and distribution of county government. They are usually controlled by a commission of elected officials who administer local governmental services. In recent years, townships have declined due to the centralization of governmental functions and urban growth.

Special Districts.

Special districts are probably the least known and least understood units of government. However, they are the most numerous kind of local government and are increasing at a faster pace than any other form of local government. Depending on their location, they also may be called "boards," "authorities," or "commissions." Typically, they are uni-functional, in that they provide a single service (for example, flood control). They are organized with the authority to tax, spend, and borrow money; and they are governed by boards which are popularly elected. Typically, the district's boundaries cut across other local governmental boundaries. An example of this might be the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. School districts are probably the most common special districts.

City Governments.

Over seventy-five percent of the American people live in urban areas with approximately 19,000 municipalities chartered within the fifty states. They all differ; however, the following are the three most common forms of organization.

1. Mayor/Council Plan. Under the mayor/council plan, both the mayor and council are elected by the citizens. The council is charged with making local laws or ordinances, while the mayor is the chief executive and sees that ordinances are enforced. In a "strong mayor/council" format, the mayor has the power to make many decisions without council approval. The mayor also has direct control over the various city offices, such as those involving police, fire, sanitation, and roads. In a "weak mayor/council" format, the council dominates and controls all city departments. The mayor usually plays a minor role in policy formation and functions many times as the ceremonial head of government.

2. Commission Plan. Under the commission plan, there is no separation of powers, since the legislative and executive functions are combined. The voters elect a city commission, typically five to seven members. Each commissioner is also a head of a city department, such as public works, fire, or health. The commissioners meet as a group to make the laws, and each is responsible for enforcing them. One of the commissioners may serve as a mayor for the purpose of presiding over meetings.

3. Council/Manager Plan. Under the council/manager government, the voters elect a city council. The council makes laws and is the policy-forming body of the government. The council hires a professional manager to run the city and oversee all city departments. One advantage of this system is that specially trained individuals, rather than politicians, run the city.

WHAT IS BEING TAUGHT?

Evidence that has been gathered in the past decade shows that the study of local government is generally a neglected subject in our social studies curriculum. It is paradoxical to note that there seems to be much less citizen knowledge about local government than about the federal or even the state government, even though the individual citizen has a greater opportunity to influence government at the local level.

According to a study reported by the *Management Information Service* of the International City Management Association in July 1963, Michigan secondary schools were surveyed in terms of their current practices in the teaching of local government.[1] The results revealed a low incidence of

[1] Ernest B. Bodner, *Municipal-School Cooperation in High School Civics Education* (Washington DC: International City Management Association, 1963).

local government being taught as part of the school curriculum. Again, in July 1974, the *Management Information Service* reported on the teaching of local government in secondary schools, and the findings were similar to those of the earlier report.[2] In more recent surveys in Ohio in 1978 and 1980 in selected municipalities, it was found that few students knew the structure of their local government or the names of their elected officials. More startling was the fact that when teachers were administered the same test, they did only slightly better than their students.[3]

Another aspect of the situation is revealed in a survey of resources used in the teaching of civics. Textbooks which are usually the main resources in government classes contain very little information about local government. Past studies in Colorado[4] and in Michigan[5] revealed that 10 percent or less of the standard textbook space was devoted to all forms of local government. A simple check of the current civics texts will reveal that this figure is still below 25 percent of the text's content.

This, then, is the current status of the teaching of the "other governments" in the social studies curriculum. Insufficient classroom instructional time, inadequate classroom resources, and a general lack of knowledge by teachers in regard to the subject continue to hamper the quality and quantity of instruction in local government.

In response to this problem, this How-To-Do-It booklet has been designed to introduce the social studies teacher to some practical suggestions for beginning and continuing studies about local governments. Both general curriculum suggestions and specific teaching strategies will be presented for the elementary, middle school, and high school levels of instruction.

[2] Robert C. Leland, "Secondary School Education and Local Governments," *Management Information Service*, Vol. 6, No. 7 (July, 1974), 1–8.

[3] Ronald Helms and Kathleen Herdman, "Student Knowledge of Local Government in the Kettering City Schools," a survey presented to the administration of the Kettering City Schools, Kettering, Ohio, February 1978; and John J. Chiodo, "Student and Teacher Knowledge of Local Government: A Selective Survey of School Systems in the Miami Valley," Research paper, Division of Teacher Education, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, April 1980.

[4] Jack Pottle, "City Hall Gets Short Changed in the Classroom," *Colorado Municipalities* (March 1965), 52.

[5] Stanley Dimond, "Local Government Education in Michigan Secondary Schools," *Michigan Municipal Review* (September 1964), 210; and Richard Dmevich, *Local Government Education in Michigan Secondary Schools* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Municipal League, 1973), 9.

SOME BASIC GOALS

Planning for the implementation of local government topics into the curriculum should proceed from some basic goals that are appropriate to the subject matter, the grade level, and the needs and interests of the learners. As a basic structure, these goals will provide a starting point for teaching objectives and learning activities that will engage students in the study of local government. The following are seven general goals that can be included in a social studies curriculum.

- To understand the structure of local government, both formal and informal, and its chief concerns and services.
- To know the functions of officers, divisions of local governments, and the names of local officials.
- To understand the nature of political influence, the role of organized interest groups, political pluralism, and the electoral process at the local level.
- To increase the students' awareness of the decision-making process at the local level of government and to engage them in decision-making processes related to local governmental problems.
- To help students learn that local government is not only accessible, but also that it needs their help and active participation as citizens.
- To show students that local government needs well-qualified candidates to hold office and requires skilled workers at all levels.
- To eliminate public apathy toward government and reduce political cynicism.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE CURRICULUM

Ideally, the topic of local government should be considered at all levels of the K–12 curriculum. It should be included in as many areas of the social studies as possible in an integrated manner. When appropriate, separate units can develop a focus on such topics as the organization and structure of local governments, the services provided, or the local problems faced.

Many possibilities exist in the primary and middle grades for teaching about this topic. For example, in the lower elementary grades, students can learn about the various services that the local government provides the community, such as safety, sanitation, health, transportation, and recreation. Bulletin boards can be prepared that contain the names of the individuals involved with these services and the tasks they perform. A collage may be created to show the work done by each of these individuals. Using the topic of recreation, students may learn about the kinds of special programs operated by the community in its parks. A field trip can be taken to a community park, and the children can be asked to identify the activities found there. A discussion can be developed on how people can keep parks clean and safe. Pictures can be drawn and stories can be written about how people use parks or about the animals that live there.

In upper elementary classrooms, a topic such as "The Community Water Supply" can be explored as part of instruction in social studies and science. Students can find out how the community gets its water from lakes, rivers, wells, or springs and how it flows to each resident's home. The process of water treatment can be explored, as well as the community's sewage system and any problems with waste water. Simple maps can be drawn to show the entire flow of the water system. In addition, basic tests can be conducted on drinking water, rainwater, and water found in streams to find out if such waters are safe to drink. A trip to the community waste-water treatment plant might be an excellent concluding activity.

At the junior high level of instruction, there are many opportunities to integrate the topic of local government into the curriculum. Courses that deal with state history can incorporate units that present the historical development of the

county and municipality where the students live. Even a topic focusing on the community's roads, streets, and highways can be studied as part of this type of course. Students can study the changing transportation patterns by observing historical maps of the community. With the help of the county engineer or the city's director of roads and maintenance, students can make comparisons between types of road construction used throughout history. Current problems can be explored in relation to road maintenance and future transportation needs.

For those students in high school social studies classes, the topic of local government often plays a minor role in the curriculum of civics classes. However, it may be integrated into other courses, such as history, geography, economics, and sociology. As a somewhat different example of a study of local government in high-school social studies, it might be suggested that students in a sociology class explore individual and group attitudes and behaviors by conducting various community surveys. Questions that elicit individual or group attitudes toward local officials, community services, community environment, local taxes, and ability to influence local government can provide students with insight into sociological concepts, as well as knowledge about local government.

PROGRAM POSSIBILITIES

Included in this section are numerous practical suggestions for beginning and continuing classroom activities that focus on the study of local government. The level to which the topic is developed depends primarily on the individual teacher's commitment to developing the program.

Low Involvement Programs.

Programs involving a limited amount of developmental time by teachers are as follows:

1. Dispensing and Reviewing Local Government Information. Local governments print many reports, maps, newsletters, pamphlets, and annual summaries that are of value to social studies instructors. Teachers can easily acquire this material and use it to provide an overview of the structure and function of the local government.

2. Assistance of Civic Organizations. Civic organizations are usually involved in service projects relating to the community. Whenever possible, they should be invited to the classroom to explain their activities. Also, such groups as the League of Women Voters often publish pamphlets describing the community and its government.

3. Local Speakers. Many local officials and staff members are appropriate speakers for classroom presentations. Teachers must prepare both the students and speaker for such presentations. Students should have some background information on the topic and possibly prepare questions that they would like to have clarified. Teachers should inform the speaker as to how the presentation fits into the ongoing class activities.

Medium Involvement Programs.

Programs involving more developmental time by teachers, as well as more instructional time, are as follows:

1. Tours. Taking tours of local facilities can be of interest to students of all ages, and they can be arranged with local governmental personnel. Many municipalities already have tours arranged by their community service directors. It is a good idea to have tours set up with a theme or topic that is being explored in the classroom. Instead of a whirlwind tour of all facilities, students and teachers can develop with local officials themes such as public safety, environmental services, legislation, and recreation. Teachers must spend time working with local personnel, discussing the content and arranging the sites that will be visited. In addition, students must be alerted to the material to be covered and to proper conduct on such tours.

2. Career Days. Teachers can work with local officials and personnel to develop programs that give students the opportunity to explore the various careers available in local government. Job descriptions, speakers, audio-visual presentations, and opportunities to spend a day with various local personnel can all add to students' awareness of public service careers and to an appreciation of a local government working for the community's benefit.

3. Police Ride-Along. Some communities already sponsor this type of activity. It is important that strict safety guidelines be established regarding the minimum age of riders, liability, hours, areas of operation, and emergency procedures. Students should be prepared in advance and possibly develop questions to ask the accompanying officer. In addition, follow-up activities should be developed in which students share experiences and discuss public safety concerns in the community.

High Involvement Programs.

Programs that involve a high level of planning by the teacher and cooperation by local personnel are as follows:

1. Development of Publications and Media Presentations. Students who have been studying various aspects of local government can develop written and/or audio-visual materials as concluding types of activities. These projects not only help to synthesize the materials studied, but they provide information for next year's students. Such activities may also be used for instructional purposes by having students teach younger children about the government in the community.

2. Video-taped Council Sessions. Teachers may want to video-tape council sessions to use for classroom instructional sessions. This can be a very useful teaching tool, especially when a local issue has given rise to various citizen groups opposing one another. However, the tape should be used in conjunction with the students doing information-gathering and analysis of the issue in advance.

3. Mock Council Meetings. These can be popular activities where students conduct a council meeting and try to decide on the passage of some local legislation. It is important that students be assigned roles and that they research the topic thoroughly. They should be instructed to make sure that they represent the views of their assigned roles. It is not usually a difficult task to arrange the use of the local council's meeting room. This will give the activities a more realistic presentation.

4. City Hall Campus. It is possible to develop a course for high-school students that is taught by local government personnel. Students can attend a class at city hall, preferably the last period of the day, where they have lectures, discussions, and hands-on participation with the people involved in government. Active participation by both students and city government is the key to the success of this type of program.

5. Internships in Government. Here a limited number of students are involved in spending three to six hours a week with city personnel for one quarter during the school year. Students spend several weeks in each department and work on specific activities that have been developed by the teacher and the local government personnel. The entire group of students will also have some general sessions with the teacher in charge of the program.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Activities that involve the study of local government should incorporate active student participation in the workings of the community and its government. In addition, there should be an active involvement of governmental officials and personnel, along with the use of government facilities. This kind of joint participation can provide meaningful experiences for students that may lead to their future citizenship involvement as residents of the community.

In developing local government activities, the following "tips" may aid teachers in involving community personnel and using local facilities.

Whom to Contact.

In many municipalities, a public information officer is hired to work with civic groups. Such officials are usually assigned to the mayor's or the city manager's office, and they can arrange for the use of city facilities, as well as help in contacting city personnel for instructional purposes. In addition, local government publications can usually be acquired through the public information officer for class instructional purposes. For municipalities that have no public service officer, contacts can be made directly with the mayor's or the city manager's office. Depending on the structure of the local government, these individuals have direct responsibility over the various departments within the governmental structure. For townships, counties, and special governmental districts, it is best to contact the secretary of the board. Often this individual is the only full-time employee of the council or governing board, and he or she is able to make the proper connections for teachers.

Meeting Governmental Personnel.

Once the initial contact has been made, it is important that personal contact be established with the individual who will help with the project. At this meeting, it is important that the teacher have a specific plan as to what he or she hopes to accomplish (goals and objectives) and the kinds of facilities and personnel that will aid in the project. If objectives are not clearly stated, the chance of getting governmental personnel to give up their free time is not great. Being organized does not mean being inflexible. A timetable may have to be modified and adapted to coordinate with the schedules of local workers and with the use of facilities. Good planning and organization are essential to the success of this type of project.

Preparing Local Personnel.

In addition to organizing activities and scheduling events with the local government personnel, teachers need to prepare these individuals for their teaching experience. Most of these persons have little or no experience in a teaching situation. The classic case is the teacher who takes her kindergarten class to the fire station, where the chief spends thirty minutes *telling* the children about all the equipment, when the children really want to climb all over the truck. Individuals must be briefed as to the age, abilities, content background, and interests of the students, and the amount of time allocated to the activity. A good balance of activities would be a combination of lecture, discussion, observation, and doing.

Conducting Activities.

Scheduling is probably the single most important factor in working with local government personnel. All individuals involved should have a copy of the sequence of events—this includes the students. Times, places, activities, speakers, and topics all should be listed as parts of the schedule. It is a good idea to have someone accompany the class who can help with troubleshooting while activities are taking place.

Follow-Up.

When all activities have been concluded, it is important to thank all those who participated. The groundwork for next semester's or next year's activities may be laid by arranging follow-up conferences to discuss future plans. Most people who participate in such activities like working with students and are willing to help in improving activities for the next group of students.

Publicizing Efforts.

These activities should not go unnoticed. Local newspapers and even radio and T.V. stations are interested in school-community activities. Pictures can be taken of the activities, or the local media can be invited to attend some of them. Notices can be sent out in advance, and calls to the news media need to be made about a week prior to the activities. The benefits of this publicity are numerous. For government personnel, it is a chance for others to recognize their efforts. This is especially true for non-politicians who do considerable governmental work and receive little public exposure. The names of all individuals who helped in the project, as well as their titles, should be given to the media. This kind of publicity usually builds better school–government relations and motivates those involved to continue contributing in future years. The publicity may even lead to monetary contributions by local civic groups and business leaders to support this type of program as an ongoing community activity. From the standpoint of the school and students, exposure in the media helps to develop a sense of school pride and academic pride. Too often, students are praised for their extracurricular activities, and academics are forgotten. Students may be encouraged by having their pictures in the newspaper for their academic achievements, and they may devote more time to their schoolwork in the future.

QUESTIONS ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are many questions that can be asked and answered by students in relation to the way local government is organized (structure), how it operates (function), and the people who work within it (personnel). The following examples provide a sampling of questions that can be researched concerning the government. The questions should be used as starting points for the many areas of local government that can be explored.

The Authority of Local Government.

- What is the legal basis for authority of your local government (charter, state constitution, statutes, etc)?
- What functions and services are the responsibilities of the government?
- How can changes be made in the structure and functions of local government without state approval? What changes, if any, have been made in the last 10 years?

The Organization of Local Government.

- How is local government organized? Who makes policy? Who administers authority?
- How many members are on the local government body? Are they elected or appointed? How often does this body meet? Are meetings open to the public?
- What are the powers and duties of this governing body?
- If a single executive officer has authority for administration, what is his or her title? Is he or she elected or appointed? To what extent do such officers initiate policy? Do they have veto power? Can they appoint, remove, or dismiss personnel?
- What local governmental departments are there? Which are headed by elected officials? Which by appointed?
- If there are advisory boards and/or commissions, what are their functions? To whom are they responsible? How are they selected? Do they report? How are their findings used?

Revenues and Expenditures of Local Government.

- What was the total income of your local government during the past year? What was the total income ten years ago? What has accounted for the change?
- What were the sources of income during the past year (local, state, federal)?
- What kinds of local taxes are collected (property, sales, income tax)? Have bonds been issued recently? For what purpose?
- What was the total cost of operating local government last year? What was the *per capita* cost? How does this compare to costs of comparable governmental units within the state? Have costs increased? Why or why not?

Local Government Personnel.

The following "model" questions can be used to find out information about elected and hired local government personnel.

- **Mayor.** Who is the mayor? Does the mayor have another job, or is being a mayor a full-time job? What qualifications are necessary to become mayor? How is the mayor chosen? What part do political parties play in choosing the mayor? What is the mayor's term of office? What is the mayor's salary? What benefits does the mayor receive other than salary?
- **Council Member.** Who are the council members? What ward or district do they represent? What is the difference between ward and at-large council members? What are the qualifications necessary to become a council member? What is the term of office? What are the responsibilities of council members? What salary and benefits do council members receive for their efforts?
- **Hired Personnel** (example—City Planner). What training, education, and experience are necessary to qualify for this position? What is the yearly salary and requirements for advancement? How does one obtain such a position? What are the responsibilities and obligations that go with this position? What are some of the positive and negative aspects of this position? Does the local community really need a person in this position? Justify its need.

Local Government and the Citizens.

The topics and questions that are presented below reflect some examples of how citizens can interact with their government. This interaction may take the form of using governmental services or being restricted by local laws or ordinances.

- **Ordinances.** Locate a copy of the local community ordinances. What are the restrictions on loud parties, late night noise, and noise pollution? What are the bicycle regulations in the community? What are the penalties for public disturbance and disorderly conduct? Are there any ordinances on shoplifting and petty theft? What rules govern the use of tobacco, alcohol, and dangerous drugs by minors? Does the community have any truancy, vagrancy, and curfew ordinances?
- **Codes and Permits.** Is there a unified local building code or series of codes? What do they cover? How are they enforced? Let's say a family wanted to add a garage onto its house. What permits are necessary before work begins? Where can permits be obtained? What is the cost of these permits and how long are they valid? What kind of inspections are made? Who makes the inspections and when are they done? What recourse is available when a disagreement arises with the building inspector?
- **Services for Senior Citizens.** Does the government have any employees whose responsibility is to provide services to senior citizens? If so, who are these employees and what are their responsibilities? If not, why not? What community facilities and programs are provided for senior citizens? Consider the following: recreation, health, food and nutrition, housing, and transportation. Does the government assist private organizations that help senior citizens? What programs are needed for senior citizens in the community that are not presently offered?

WHAT ABOUT SIMULATIONS?

For more than a decade now, simulations have become commonplace in social studies classrooms. Using simulations, students have tried to solve world crises, traveled the Oregon Trail, settled new continents, and participated in the Stock Market Crash of 1929, as a means of understanding social studies. Generally, this type of instructional process has not only helped students understand the information at hand, but it has also led them to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills. By reducing complex real-life situations into manageable classroom interactions, students are able to par-

ticipate in a form of active learning.

The use of simulations in teaching about local government can be a valuable instructional procedure. Students can assume the roles of local politicians or members of a citizen's group in formulating positions on such issues as land rezoning, curfew ordinances, or tax increases. Teachers who choose to use this strategy with their students have two options available: purchase commercial simulations, or develop one's own simulations based on the local community.

Commercial Simulations.

There are several commercial simulations available for the study of local government; some are listed in the resource materials section of this booklet. In general, the benefit of this type of simulation is that all the materials are readily produced, and all that the teacher has to do is study the manual and incorporate the simulation into classroom use. The limitations, however, are that these simulations deal with hypothetical communities and issues that may or may not relate to the local community. Students may view these as "just a game," and not as relevant to what is happening in their community.

Teacher-Made Simulations.

Simulations developed by teachers can reflect the current issues in the local community and can be based on the specific local governmental structure. Such simulations can be of value, for students attempt to deal with issues and to solve problems that are currently affecting their own community. However, the limitation to teacher-made simulations is in direct contrast to the commercial ones. Teachers must design their own simulations since they are not readily available, and this may develop into a time-consuming process. However, the benefits of a teacher-made simulation far outweigh the limitations. The following section, therefore, is a review of a simple model for developing a local government simulation for classroom use.

DEVELOPING A LOCAL GOVERNMENT SIMULATION

The first step in developing a simulation is obvious. A decision must be made as to what to simulate. It is especially important at first to keep things simple. Complex simulations can discourage both teachers and students, especially if they are unsure of the process. For the purpose of illustration, let's take the example of designing a local government simulation on how a council would deal with a land rezoning issue in the community. In addition, it is important to think about identifying the objectives. What kind of learning outcomes should be achieved? In the example, it might be stated that the students will become familiar with the local governmental process of formulating laws and ordinances; that they will understand the roles that citizens have in determining local decisions; and that they will develop skills in research, oral and written language usage, problem solving, and decision making.

Once a decision is made as to the type of simulation, a simple model should be developed of the process that will help achieve the objectives. Simulations often seem like good ideas at first; but, if a workable sequence for the procedures cannot be developed, the simulation idea must be discarded and another type of teaching strategy considered.

In the example, the model might be as follows: A simulation of a city council meeting in which a decision will be made by the council on a land rezoning issue. The participants include the mayor, council members, heads of various departments (police, fire, engineering, etc.), a school board member, local developer, a chamber of commerce member, and members of local neighborhood groups. The procedure would be as follows: The teacher presents an overview of the problem; students are then assigned various roles; the students research their roles by gathering information from the actual local government officials and citizens involved; a mock council meeting takes place where the various views are presented to the council; and the council deliberates and decides on the issue.

At this stage, it is necessary to define clearly all the participants and what roles they will assume. In addition, a decision must be made as to what each member of the class will be doing, for many times the actual number of participants in the simulation will not correspond to the number of students in the class. A simple solution to this problem is to assign several students to a role and have them work as a team in developing their information and presentation. In the rezoning problem, the actual participants would be six council members, the mayor, the police chief, the fire chief, the city engineer, the land owner, the land developer, the president of the chamber of commerce, a school board member, and three presidents of various neighborhood groups. The total number of participants is seventeen, which can be increased by adding roles or grouping students. It can also be decreased by eliminating some roles.

In addition to knowing what the individual roles are, students need to know what their objectives are for their individual roles or the role of the group. What are they trying to achieve, acquire, or obtain as an end result of the simulation? For the rezoning problem, each student's objectives will depend on the actual person's position that he or she is portraying. For example, if a student is playing the role of the city engineer, he or she will be trying to represent accurately this person's opinion of the project and to support it with valid data.

Once roles are clearly defined, it must be determined what information or resources are necessary for each participant. Will each participant get some background information? Will it be similar or different for each role? Will the students develop their own information base on some guidelines? In some simulations, particular props will need to be developed. If so, will the teacher make these in advance or will the students develop them? The background information needed as part of the rezoning example can be provided by both teacher and student. The teacher may bring in newspaper articles and local government materials related to the topic. This can be used by all groups for resource information. The students will be asked to contact the various individuals whose roles they are assuming and to interview them to get their positions on the issue. This can be done out of class by the students or by a teacher-arranged field trip to the government center.

Next, the simulation needs some rules that describe the sequence of events and the behaviors that are permissible while the simulation is taking place. The rezoning problem intends to have the council decide whether the land will or will not be rezoned. Thus, the following rules might apply. The teacher presents the local issue. Students are assigned roles. Students research the issue and interview the local individual whom they portray. A council meeting takes place. The mayor conducts the order of business. City department heads speak, those favoring the issue speaking first. Those opposed to the issue speak next. An open discussion takes place (rebuttal and counter arguments). The council moves to executive session, and each council member presents his or her views. The council then votes on the issue. The sim-

ilarities end with a teacher-led discussion.

A scenario needs to be developed to put the simulation in its proper perspective. This can be done either in written form or by having the teacher provide background information. To develop a scenario for the rezoning issue, the teacher can present various excerpts from newspaper articles or editorials, or develop a written overview of the issue.

Finally, questions should be developed by the teacher to be used in a debriefing session. These can relate to how the simulation was conducted (its reality), and general questions on the issues can be presented. Some questions are as follows: Did each student present his or her role correctly? Did the mayor exhibit enough control over the council session? What is your own personal position on the issue of rezoning? How can government balance the rights of an individual (the landowner's freedom to do whatever he or she wants with the land) with the rights of a group (what is collectively good for the majority of residents in the area)?

A FINAL WORD

Teaching about local governments can be a stimulating introduction to the exploration of other significant factors affecting decision making in communities, such as the activities of nongovernmental groups. Indeed, in time, the term "local" may be considered too narrow to describe the multitude of interrelated actions and events involved in the study of this level of government. That time cannot come too soon!

RESOURCE MATERIALS

The following references offer practical suggestions for resource material for classroom use.

Books

Chiodo, John J. (ed.). *Teaching About Local Government*. Columbus: Great Lakes Councils for The Social Studies, 1978. The text provides a series of lesson plans and simulations for elementary and secondary instruction.

Cutler, Irving, *et al. Urban Communities*. Columbus: Charles Merrill, 1982. A text for grades 7–12 that presents the organization, structure, and problems that urban communities face. A media pack is also available.

Eichner, James A. *The First Book of Local Government*. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1976. State, county, and city government functions are emphasized in this book. Written for grades 4–8.

Hudson, Margaret and Weaver, Ann. *In Your Community*. Palo Alto: Fearon Publishers, Inc., 1973. Designed for grades 4–8, the book provides an overview of the duties of community helpers, the political process, the need for laws, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Groll, Richard and Zevin, Jack. *Law and the City*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974. The structure of the city and the legal system are revealed through text narration and brief vignettes (grades 7–12).

Jantzen, Steven, Jackson, Carolyn, and Lunger, Norman. *State and Local Government*. New York: Scholastic Book Service, 1983. A high-school text that details the functions, problems, and justice system through a narrative, vignettes, and activities.

Local Government: A Curriculum Guide. New Jersey: Institute for Political and Legal Education, 1975. A teaching guide that focuses on the functions and problems of local government.

Moulton, Muriel. *Needs and Services*. Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1974. The Needs and Services booklet presents issues facing local leaders for grades 7–12.

The Municipal Yearbook. International City Management Association, 1140 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Published annually as an authoritative résumé of urban data and developments.

Tretton, Rudie W. *State and Local Governments*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978. The book presents a variety of divergent and conflicting views relating to the organization and services of local government for high school students.

Wallace, John, *et al. Urban Studies*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1981. A middle-level and secondary-level text that offers over thirty field and laboratory studies on the problems and growth of urban areas.

Periodicals

Nation's Cities. Published monthly by the National League of Cities, 1620 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20006. Examines contemporary urban issues and achievements of American cities meeting citizen needs.

Public Management. Published monthly by the International City Management Association, 1140 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20036. Each issue focuses on current topics or controversies in public management.

Simulations/Games

Reese, Jay and Wesley, John. *Council*. California: Interact, 1978. Designed for grades 5–8, "Council" simulates problem solving at the community level.

Feldt, Allan G. *Clug*. New York: Urbex Affiliates, Inc., 1972. High-school students work in groups to make decisions on how to build a city.

Rosser, David. *Pressure*. California: Interact, 1972. High-school students assume roles of local neighborhood groups in solving issues of zoning, ecology, and school costs.

Rosser, David. *Taxes*. California: Interact, 1974. High-school students assume occupational roles and consider tax alternatives to determine what is fair for the community. □

The How To Do It Notebook Series 3, designed for a loose-leaf binder, provides a practical and useful source of classroom methods and techniques for elementary and secondary social studies teachers. Series is published by the National Council for the Social Studies, 3501 Newark Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016. Additional copies: 1–9 copies, $2.00 each; 10–49 copies, $1.60 each; 50–99 copies, $1.40 each; 100–499 copies, $1.20 each; 500–999 copies, $1.00 each; 1,000 or more copies, $.80 each.